



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Ocean Service  
Office of Response and Restoration  
Coastal Protection and Restoration Division  
<http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/cpr/cpr.html>

## NOAA CRC Program Waste Site Fact Sheet

September 2004

**Site Name:** Portland Harbor

**Site Location:** Portland, Oregon

**Congressional District:** OR 03

**EPA Region:** 10

**Site Description:** The lower Willamette River was named a Superfund site by the US EPA in 2000 because studies showed that sediments in the river bottom are contaminated with PAHs, PCBs, pesticides, herbicides, dioxins/furans, and metals. The Superfund site includes an approximately six mile stretch of the river in the northern section of Portland. Within the site, numerous industries, including an oil gasification plant, ship repair facilities, agricultural chemical manufacturing, rail car construction, wood treating facilities, and port activities occur or once occurred along the shores of river. The site has been nicknamed "Portland Harbor" since most of it is a working waterway.

**Cleanup Status:** The remedial investigation began in 2001 and is ongoing, with a major sediment sampling effort to be completed in the fall of 2004. A significant amount of data has already been collected, including detailed sediment grain size information; a sediment trend analysis that identified likely areas of erosion and deposition; a sediment profile image study; multiple rounds of bathymetry; fish tissue from 12 fish species plus crayfish; and some surface sediment chemistry. At least one more round of sampling will be required to fill data gaps, refine cleanup boundaries, and support the selection of remedial strategies. EPA has already identified three "hot spot" sites where contaminants in sediments pose an immediate and substantial risk. Early Cleanup activities will be implemented at these sites before the full site investigation is completed.



*Biologists in 2002 using electroshocking equipment mounted on a boat to sample for fish. Photo courtesy of US EPA.*

**NOAA Resources at Risk:** NOAA is involved in the site investigation and cleanup work at Portland Harbor because the site impacts natural resources that NOAA manages on behalf of the public. The Willamette River supports spawning populations of Chinook and coho salmon, steelhead, American shad, Pacific lamprey, and white sturgeon, all NOAA trust resources. The lower river, between the mouth and Willamette Falls, provides a migratory corridor for both juvenile and adult anadromous fish and juvenile rearing habitat for several anadromous species. Three runs of Chinook, two runs of steelhead, and individual runs of coho and sockeye salmon occur in the area. Several of these runs are either listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

**NOAA's Work on the Remedy:** NOAA has been working closely with EPA, Oregon DEQ and our co-trustee agencies since the site was named a Superfund site. NOAA has provided comments on dozens of technical documents, including work plans, data reports, and risk assessment plans. NOAA has also developed a watershed database and mapping project that allows the project team to display, analyze, sort and summarize data from numerous sources. The project includes sediment chemistry data, sediment bioassay test results, bathymetry, aerial photography, habitat types, outfall locations, and land use information. The project has been used by the team to help identify candidate sites for early actions, and to help design the field sampling plan for 2004.

**NOAA's Work as a Natural Resource Trustee:** As a natural resource trustee, NOAA works closely with EPA to ensure that the remedial investigation is protective of NOAA trust resources. If the remedy cannot address all the trustee concerns, NOAA can negotiate additional measures as part of the government settlement to ensure that natural resources will be protected and restored. At this site we are working cooperatively with a group of ten potentially responsible parties to assess natural resource injuries concurrently with the remedial investigation and to develop various remedial and restoration strategies. We are not alone in these efforts; NOAA is one of nine natural resource trustees at the Portland Harbor site. Our eight co-trustees are:

- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon
- Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation

The trustees have formed a trustee council, which meets monthly in Portland. The trustees will rely heavily on the remedial investigation data collected for EPA, but will require some additional studies to determine whether and to what extent natural resources have been injured. Planning for these studies is underway.

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